

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION

15 May 1987

David Brownlee, Chairman

The Twenty-eighth meeting of the Committee on Historic Designation began at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, 15 May 1987, in the Planning Commission Room, 14th Floor, City Hall Annex.

Present: David Brownlee, Chairman of the Committee on Historic Designation
David Baldinger, Deputy Director, Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Caroline Golab
Hyman Myers

Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer
Philadelphia Historical Commission
Patricia A. Siemiontkowski, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer, Philadelphia Historical Commission
Randal Baron, Preservation Planner, Philadelphia Historical Commission

NEW BUSINESS

The Committee reviewed nominations of the following historical and architectural resources.

Rittenhouse/Fitler Residential District

The Rittenhouse/Fitler Residential District exemplifies a cohesive and essentially intact Victorian and twentieth century neighborhood reflecting the architectural and social history of Philadelphia. The district reflects three major historical and architectural trends. Along Pine, Spruce and Delancey Streets, the mid 19th century red brick Greek Revival and Italianate speculative rowhouses, the stereotype of the Quaker City, extend from east of Broad westward. Originating at the western edge of the district stand the smaller rowhouses of the workers who labored in the river related industries and in the homes of the wealthier residents of Rittenhouse. The principal acclaim of Rittenhouse rests on the elegant, architect designed mansions and townhouses and the apartment buildings of the upper classes throughout the district. These include the landmarks of a century of Philadelphia's most important designers - Thomas U.

Walter, John Notman, John MacArthur, Frank Furness, George Hewitt, T.P. Chandler, Cope and Stewardson, Wilson Eyre and George Howe among others. Other buildings have housed some of Philadelphia's most important social, cultural, ecclesiastical and educational institutions. Rittenhouse Square itself has provided a focus for much of this development and remains one of the most important and attractive urban spaces in Philadelphia. It is the extraordinary concentration of landmarks, institutions and unaltered streetscapes spanning the past century and a half and continuing until the present that makes the Rittenhouse/Fitler Residential District unique and significant.

The Committee voted 5 - 0 to recommend the Rittenhouse/Fitler Residential District for Designation. Janet Klein who could not attend the meeting cast her vote by telephone.

The Committee voted separately on each aspect of the designation including the approval of the name, the boundaries as seen on the attached map, the text of the Nomination form and the inclusion of a paragraph in the Statement of Significance to discuss the contribution of modern buildings in the streetscape. In each case the Committee voted unanimously in favor of each of these items.

Hertz Lot

bounded by Vine,
Callowhill, Front
Streets and Delaware
Avenue

Popularly known as the Hertz Lot, the parcel bounded by Vine Street, Delaware Avenue, Callowhill Street and Front Street, possesses significance as the site of the West shipyard, the Penny Pot House and landing, and a variety of commercial, waterfront and maritime activities beginning in the 1670s. Research, in deeds, maps, other primary source materials and the secondary literature, including reports on analogous archaeological studies in Philadelphia and other cities, indicates a high probability of the survival of archaeological evidence on the development of the port of Philadelphia from the seventeenth through the late nineteenth centuries. Dating from 1676, the West shipyard has particular significance, for rather little is known about seventeenth century shipbuilding. Moreover, except for the Hertz Lot, virtually all remains of the seventeenth and eighteenth century port were destroyed by the construction of I-95 and the improvements to Delaware Avenue. The site meets criteria a, d, j and especially i for entry on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

The Committee recommended the designation of the site by a vote of 5 - 0. Janet Klein who could not attend the meeting cast her vote by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,

Kandal Baron
Preservation Planner

RB:sj